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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4143

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6179

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3862

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3721

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4423

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4346

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000133

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN; DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/27/2020

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: TEACHERS' NGO SUBSUMED BY ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

REF: 09 ASHGABAT 990

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On January 25, poloff met with the Director of the Turan Mugallym Association Jamila Sarjayeva to discuss the group's recent activities. Last year, the group decided to discontinue its efforts to become a registered NGO after its applications had been rejected seven times since 2007 (reftel). Sarjayeva reported that, as of December 2009, Turan Mugallym had become part of the Academy of Sciences and its teachers had become state employees. Although Sarjayeva insisted that Turan Mugallym still exists, the organization now carries the title of the Department of Foreign Language Training at the Academy of Sciences. Sarjayeva, who officially retired 15 years ago, was named the department's chairperson. She was very upbeat about the change in Turan Mugallym's status, saying that the government had recognized the value of the work that the group does. If the group had not had the vision to anticipate the need for English training, set up the organization and obtain the material and human resources necessary for its work, no one would have been in a position to meet this current need. She noted that Departments of Computer Training and Political Philosophy were also created, but the computer training department lacks the resources to carry out its mandate of training graduate students. The political philosophy department involves studying books like the Ruhnama and, according to Sarjayeva, is the Turkmen successor to Soviet-era mandatory ideological training. Despite the teachers' status as government employees, their salaries are four months in arrears. She made clear that Turan Mugallym will still rely on the support of foreign donors in order to employ its staff and carry out its work.

¶2. (C) Sarjayeva enthusiastically described English training being conducted for 36 government economists working at nine different ministries and agencies, including the Ministries of Finance and Economy and the Institutes for Statistics and Strategic Planning. The training is part of USAID's Economic Reforms to Enhance Competitiveness (EREC) program, implemented by Deloitte. She pointed out that there were no training facilities at the ministries and all the equipment being used had been acquired through foreign donors.

Although the government had initially proposed a three-month course of study, Sarjayeva said she insisted on ten months in order that the participants actually gain a useful exposure to English. All the participants are required to register their attendance at each class, and the attendance sheets are turned in to the respective ministries. Sarjayeva said that, based on her experience, that was the only way to hold the participants accountable. She mentioned cases in the past when officials had tried to pressure her to give them good grades. Nonetheless, the "authority," which she clarified to mean the Cabinet of Ministers, understands that she can refuse such demands. Sarjayeva shared that she feels "support and respect" from high levels within the government, which is why she continues with her work.

¶13. (C) In addition to training these government officials, Sarjayeva's organization is also conducting English courses for 310 graduate students. She said they are teaching more students than the Institute of Foreign Languages. Courses are held at the Polytechnic Institute, Academy of National Economy, Agriculture University and the Medical Institute. The students will be given mid-term exams, which are not part of the normal curriculum, but were included at Sarjayeva's insistence. She intended to show that her organization was interested in achieving quality results, not just having a large number of students.

¶14. (C) COMMENT: It seemed that no organization had a better chance for registration as an NGO than Turan Mugallym, given the support it received from many government officials. Although Sarjayeva is pleased with the organization's new

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status within the Academy of Sciences, and insisted Turan Mugallym would continue to exist, it is likely that the government engineered a friendly take-over that will preempt further consideration of registration as an NGO. As such, Turan Mugallym's new official status is a setback for efforts to expand the role of civil society in Turkmenistan. END COMMENT.

CURRAN